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A Christian's Attitude Toward the Press

*A Suggested Plan for a Project for
Young People's Groups*

By
ERWIN L. SHAVER



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
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TOWARD THE PRESS

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GIFT OF
SHAILER MATHEWS

A FOREWORD TO YOUNG PEOPLE

The flame of God through your spirit stirs,
Adventurers,—O Adventurers!

Yes, you are adventurers, abounding in life and looking forward joyfully to the opportunities of the new day. With you action counts more than words. You are eager to have your chance to discover, to create, and to accomplish. In your own new way you intend to make this a better world to live in. You spurn hypocrisy and demand a creed that can be interpreted in terms of everyday life.

It is these qualities of yours which the author has taken into account in suggesting a program for your young people's group. At first glance it may seem a strange way to organize a course, but as you look more carefully, you will see that it is not just a course of study. In its various sections you will find a program which will call forth your highest and best energy.

With the hope that you will find in this project program that which stirs into flame your spirit of adventure, which furnishes you an opportunity to do the things that count most, and which challenges your highest Christian ideals, the author dedicates this little book to the youth of today.

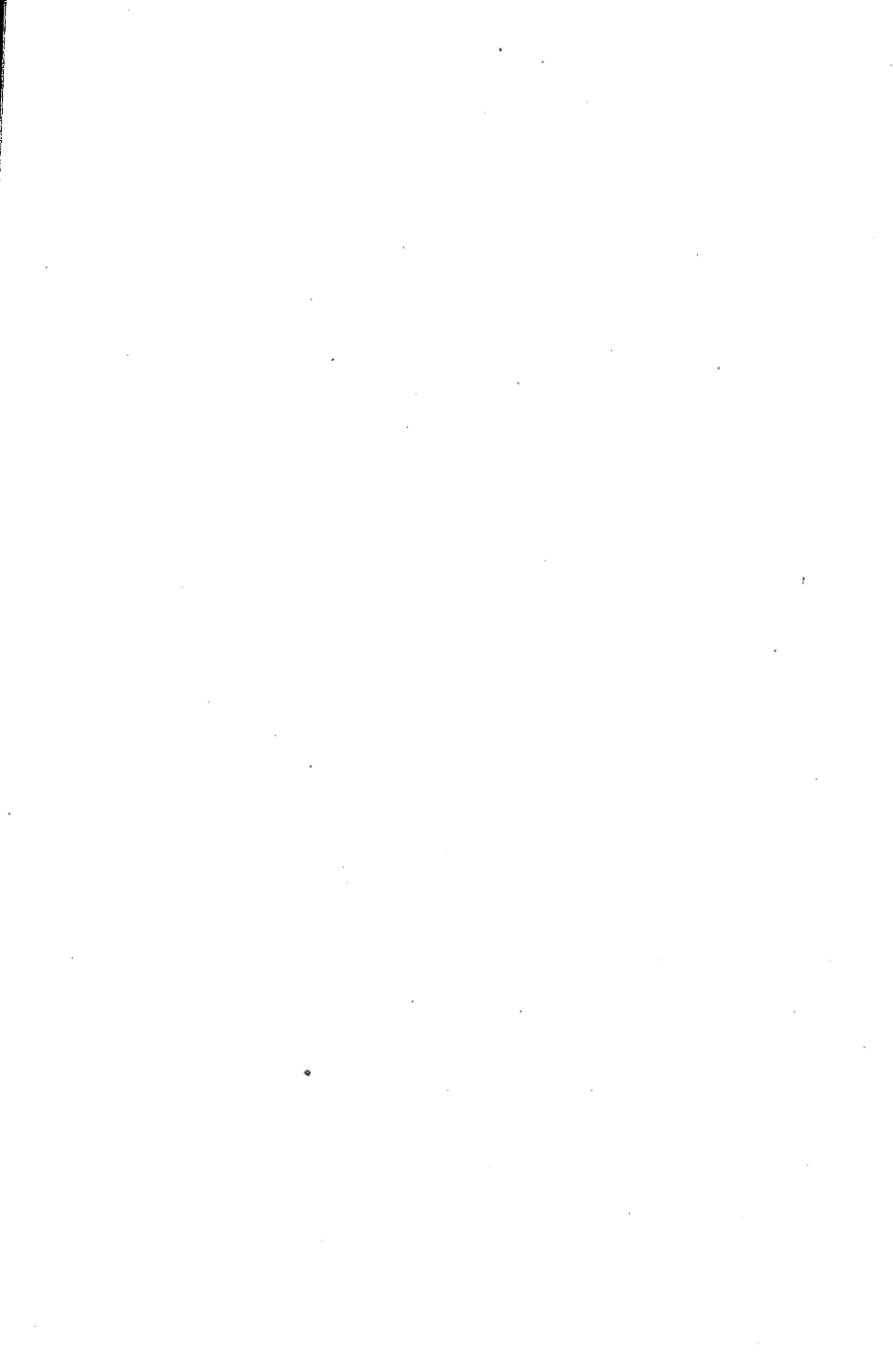
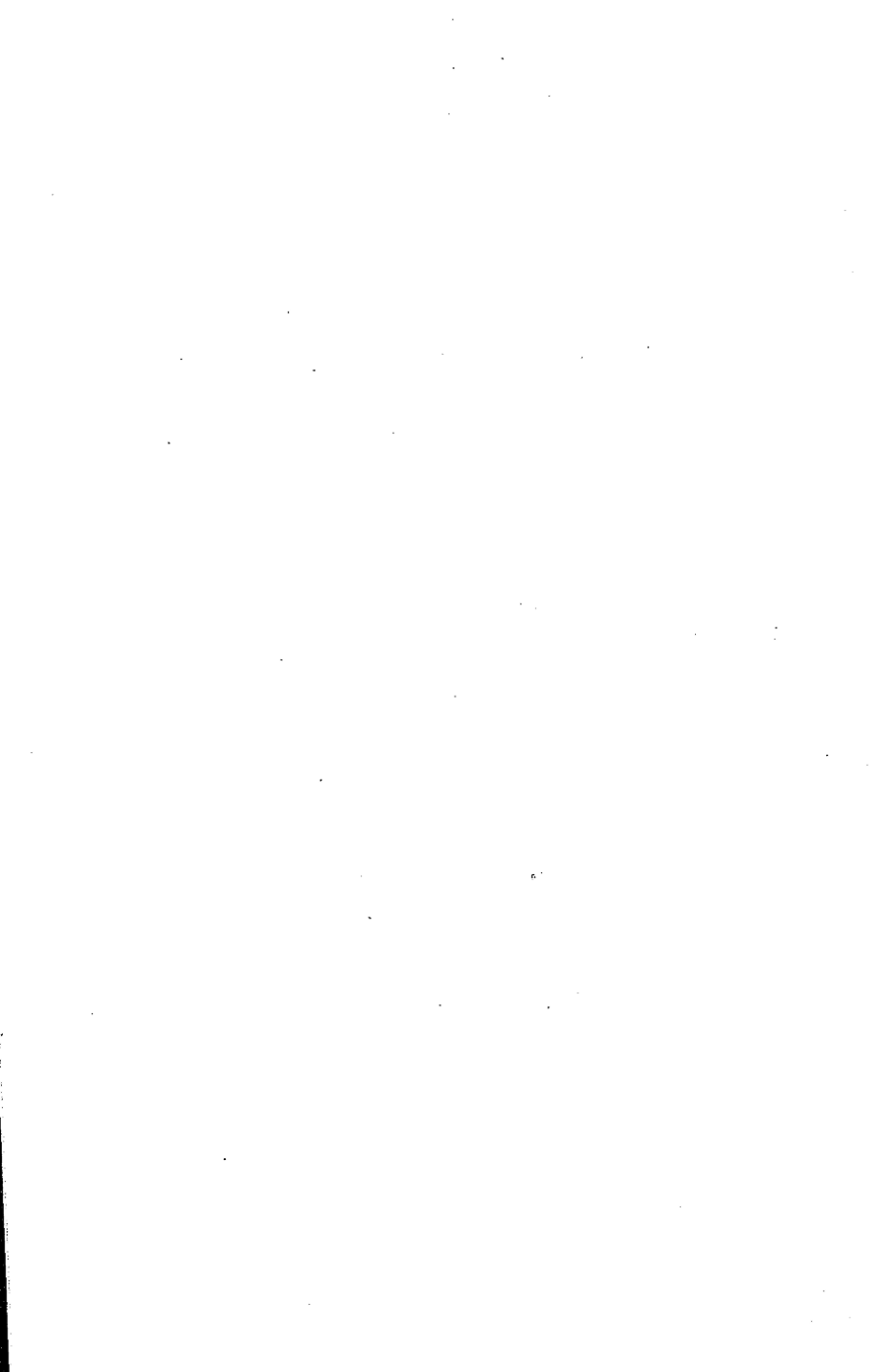


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INTRODUCTION

Every young person knows the popular meaning of the term "propaganda" and is also aware of the fact that our newspapers are being quite severely criticized today on the ground that they are spreading many false and evil impressions. Though you may not be as voracious readers as your elders, your more casual scanning of headlines renders you even more susceptible to impressions that come to you from these sources. Perhaps few of us ever realize to how great an extent our opinions are thus unconsciously formed.

The public press is undoubtedly a very powerful factor in present-day civilization. Its character is as different from that of the press of a generation or two ago as the airplane is from the stage-coach. The improvements in the technique of gathering and printing news, the tremendous increase in the strength of publishing organizations, and the dominance of the commercial motive are all indicative of this change.

It is therefore quite necessary that young people should discover the facts regarding this most important factor in the creation of public opinion

so that the ideas and ideals which they form as they come to maturity may be free from prejudice and based on a regard for truth. The object of this project course is to assist you in developing an intelligent and effective attitude which is on the Christian level toward the public press.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO ORGANIZATION

1. This project is for groups whose members are of later high-school or college age, and the things to do are such that young people of this age can both do and enjoy them. Better results will be obtained if membership in the group which enters upon this project is on one's own initiative, in which case the interests and talents of some persons who are younger and others who are older will lead them to join your group.

If all the sub-projects are undertaken, a group of considerable size, say from twenty to forty members, could work together. Sunday-school classes could combine or whole departments work upon the project. As a basis of correlation for the work of your young people's society and the morning session of your Sunday school, the plan is well adapted.

2. Some of your existing organization may be carried over into the new enterprise, but only those officers and committees should be used which make for effective work. The necessary committees and their work are given later (see "Specific Group Activities," 4). Let membership be on the basis

of fitness to do the special task. For example, let the persons interested in cartoons study and investigate that phase of the problem, and those who excel in English serve on the committee on correspondence.

3. If the program finally made is extensive, the equivalent of three meetings a week will be needed—Sunday-evening meetings of the entire group for hearing speakers and listening to special reports; midweek meetings of the group or of committees for preparing programs, for taking trips for observation, or for social or recreational programs; and Sunday-morning meetings for discussion of what you have seen and heard. For one possible plan of meetings, see "Suggested Programs," A.

4. Your leader or counselor should be one who is in sympathy with the purpose of the project. As assistants or associates he should have available members of the church constituency (or Christian laymen from other churches) to render assistance when called upon. In this particular project such persons as teachers of English, newspaper and magazine editors and managers, advertising specialists, etc., who have the Christian viewpoint can give excellent help. These adults are in duty bound to invest their talents and interests in the Christian character development of the young persons in their midst.

5. The question of whether the scope of the project shall include an investigation of both newspapers and magazines is left to the group. Some will find it possible to consider both these agencies; others may prefer to limit their study to the newspaper or magazine only.

SPECIFIC GROUP ACTIVITIES, OR SUB-PROJECTS

In order to accomplish the total result desired in such a project as this, a number of minor projects will need to be undertaken. Those given below are typical. If you do not find it possible to undertake them all, you may choose from among them.

1. The group should hold meetings for the purpose of gathering information on the subjects bearing upon their problem. The Sunday-evening hour offers the best time for this in most churches. In some cases, this information can best be given by an older person who is not regularly a member of the group. In others, the young people themselves can prepare and present the material (see "Schedule of Meetings" and "Committee Work").

2. Following the presentation of informational material, preferably at the next Sunday-morning session of the group, there should be group discussion under the direction of the leader. Those who have presented the material the previ-

ous Sunday evening should be present to take part also.

3. There will be a variety of midweek meetings for activities closely related to the Sunday meetings. Suggested midweek activities are:

a) Committee work, the nature of which is given in detail below.

b) Individual work upon the preparation of topics.

c) A visit to a newspaper plant for the purpose of observing how the work is carried on. Where this is not practicable, a stereopticon lecture or moving-picture describing the process may be substituted. In the "Schedule of Meetings" this activity is placed following the talk upon, and before the discussion of, the topic, "Publishing the News."

d) An advertisement social as a recreational feature for the sixth week. Guessing games may be devised based upon the pictures and slogans used by advertisers of automobiles, articles of food, etc.

e) An All-Church Conference and Exhibit suggested for the twelfth week as a climax to the project. At this time the group share their findings with the older members of the church. More detailed suggestions for this event are given later under "Suggested Programs," C.

4. *Committee work.*—A large portion of the

educational value of the project can be obtained by having the members of the group serve on committees. In the schedule of meetings the informational material the first five weeks can be supplied by adult helpers. After that it is suggested that for five weeks this informational material be gathered and presented by four committees. In addition, committees on findings and publicity are desirable. These various committees and their work are as follows:

a) Committee on News Analysis: To make a twofold report the evening meetings of the eighth and ninth weeks. Since the work of this committee is so important it is given special treatment under "Suggested Programs," B.

b) Committee on Advertisements: To report the evening of the sixth week after studying the amount and kinds of advertising in newspapers, its effect upon papers as news agencies and other related problems with particular reference to what Christian groups should do to remedy any undesirable situations. Those serving on this committee will profit by a study of the work suggested for the Committee on News Analysis (see "Suggested Programs," B).

c) Committee on Cartoons and Pictures: To report the evening of the seventh week with information regarding the present situation with reference to these features and recommendations as

to what Christian groups can do to improve their quality. This Committee also will receive help by a study of "Suggested Programs," B.

d) Committee on Correspondence: It is suggested that this Committee write to a selected number of Christian editors early in the project asking for their views of the purpose of their papers and how the papers are fulfilling this purpose. These statements would make a most interesting report for the evening meeting of the tenth week. Another helpful piece of work for this Committee would be to convey to editors and managers of papers the criticism of the group of the work their papers are doing, criticisms commendatory as well as unfavorable. In the course of the project you may find it necessary to take action on some feature of a paper affecting Christian standards.

e) Committee on Findings: The secretary should be a member of this Committee, which should make its report at the All Church Conference and Exhibit the twelfth week. The work of this Committee will be to gather up the material discovered by the group and to prepare a summary report of the opinion of the group as to what constitutes a Christian attitude toward the public press. In such a report or platform might be included the ideas of the members as to whether a Christian daily paper should be established.

f) Committee on Publicity: The task of this Committee is to devise ways and means of putting before others the material discovered by the group. It should plan for the All-Church Conference and Exhibit, prepare posters and charts, make a collection of some of the best news and pictures found in newspapers and magazines, and keep a bulletin board on which to post appropriate material.

5. *Worship programs.*—In connection with regular meetings of the group, devotional meetings will be held which should take their themes from the problems under consideration. Such devotional meetings may be in charge of the president or other officer of the group, or a special committee may be created. The opportunity for providing an adequate worship setting for the All-Church Conference and Exhibit should not be overlooked.

SUGGESTED PROGRAMS

A. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

First week

- Sunday morning: Explanation of the plan. Group organization and appointment of committees
- Sunday evening: Talk by Adult Associate: "The Modern Newspaper"
- Midweek: Committee meetings for organization and planning of work

Second week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of first Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Talk by adult associate: "The Newspaper and Public Opinion"

Midweek: Committee meetings

Third week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of second Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Talk by adult associate: "Gathering the News" [with attention to Press associations and Publicity bureaus]

Midweek: Committee meetings

Fourth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of third Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Talk by adult associate: "Publishing the News"

Midweek: Committee meetings and observation trip to newspaper plant

Fifth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of fourth Sunday evening and of facts discovered on midweek trip

Sunday evening: Talk by adult associate: "The Ownership and Control of Our Newspapers"

Midweek: Committee meetings

Sixth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of fifth Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Report of Committee on Advertisements

A CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRESS II

Midweek: Committee meetings and advertisement social

Seventh week

Sunday morning: Discussion of report of sixth Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Report of Committee on Cartoons and Pictures

Midweek: Committee meetings

Eighth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of report of seventh Sunday evening

Sunday evening: First Report of Committee on News

Midweek: Committee meetings

Ninth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of report of eighth Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Second Report of Committee on News

Midweek: Committee meetings

Tenth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of report of ninth Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Report of Committee on Correspondence

Midweek: Committee meetings

Eleventh week

Sunday morning: Discussion of report of tenth Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Talk: "Famous Christian Editors"

Midweek: Committee meetings

Twelfth week

Sunday morning: Discussion of topic of eleventh Sunday evening

Sunday evening: Debate: "Resolved, That the churches should establish a Christian daily newspaper"

Midweek: All-Church Conference and Exhibit

Thirteenth week

Sunday morning: Discussion: "What We Have Gained from this Project"

B. WORK OF COMMITTEE ON NEWS

The work of this committee should find expression in two reports, the first of which gives an analysis of the news features of typical daily papers which are read in the homes of the young people. The second report should show these facts in the light of the Christian ideal and suggest helpful ways of improving the papers with particular reference to what the group can do collectively and individually.

The *first report* may be made on the basis of the news in a single typical paper for a specified period of time and by comparison of several papers for a single day. By clipping or marking in some way the amount of space given to various kinds of news can be ascertained, as important events (political, national, and international), crime, human interest, sporting, social, accidents, and the like. More important than this, however, is an examination with the purpose of discovering whether the news is sensational in nature, whether the headlines accurately represent the actual news

description, whether some kinds of news are featured to the exclusion of others, whether there is evidence of prejudice or bias and the cause, and whether the paper on the whole is helpful and constructive. Such questions as the following may start the Committee thinking:

1. Is the news of the day printed and the several kinds given their reasonable share of space?
2. Could any of it have been written more helpfully?
3. Should any of it have been abbreviated or left out entirely?
4. How much of it is material which does not harmonize with the editor's or owner's views?
5. Are any important articles located in inconspicuous places? Why?
6. Does this paper have a motto? How does it compare with that you have seen in other papers? Is it lived up to?
7. Do you know whether this paper has refused to publish any news? Was it justified in so doing?
8. What is the best and most helpful article in the paper? The least helpful?
9. Does this paper publish what the people want to read? Should it adopt this policy?
10. Does the question of ownership have anything to do with the character of the paper?

The *second report* will grow out of the facts discovered in the first and the discussion of them by the group. The committee should seek to suggest just how the present-day newspaper fulfils or does not fulfil the Christian ideal for society, and

what can be done to improve the situation. In its thinking the Committee will probably face such questions as these:

1. In what particular ways does the news in this paper fail to meet the Christian ideal?
2. Is it possible to remedy these defects? How could it be done?
3. If the paper is not improved what then should be done?
4. Are there any features which deserve commendation? How should we commend them?
5. Should the government start a news bulletin with the aim of simply stating the news without bias or color?
6. Should the church start a Christian daily paper?
7. If our group should decide to act in any of these suggestions how could the assistance of other groups of Christians be obtained?

C. ALL-CHURCH CONFERENCE AND EXHIBIT

The purpose of this occasion, as stated above, is to have the young people share their views in a spirit of helpfulness with their older friends in the church and to seek their assistance if needed in carrying further any portion of the project still uncompleted, such as passing resolutions representing the attitude of the whole church toward the press. The action taken will depend upon circumstances, and may be commendatory or the opposite.

The meeting should be held on some convenient week-night, and should begin with a brief informal social hour with refreshments and an op-

portunity for the older friends to examine the exhibit materials. The exhibit prepared by the Committee on Publicity with the help of all the other members of the young people's group might contain such features as:

a) A statement of the group's purpose and method of organization for the work they have accomplished.

b) Minutes of the meetings held.

c) A collection of all the material gathered bearing on the project, such as charts, posters, pictures, interesting curios in connection with newspaper history, etc.

d) Copies of committee reports.

e) Questions used in discussion.

f) A copy of the findings of the group.

The program following the examination of the exhibit materials should be in charge of the Committee on Publicity. If printed or mimeographed it might read something like this:

A CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS

ON

THE PUBLIC PRESS

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.—

JOHN 8:32.

Statement of the purpose of the Conference . Chairman
Hymn—"America"

Brief account of the project . . . Group Leader

"What This Project Has Meant to Us"

[One-minute testimonies by five or six members of the group]

Report of Findings Secretary
Conference [Open to old and young]

Resolutions

Prayer Pastor

Hymn—"O Beautiful for Spacious Skies"

INSURING CHRISTIAN-EDUCATION VALUES

The development of such a project as this in the curriculum of a Christian church school is not to be thought of simply as an interesting program to catch the fancy of young people. While it is based upon the law that learning is in direct proportion to interest, nevertheless, there is a danger that the best results will be lost if certain cautions are not observed.

1. This plan should be thought of as source material from which the local group make one which is suited to their needs and conditions. While there may be some churches in which a program as comprehensive as this could be undertaken and completed within the three months allotted, it is doubtful that all the activities could be undertaken in the average church.

2. Again it is necessary to emphasize the value of activity on the part of the members of the group. In proportion as they undertake the

committee work suggested and their initiative is developed, they will grow in the desired direction. Sunday meetings for the purpose of hearing interesting talks will bring relatively little return unless viewed by the group as means to the accomplishment of a definite purpose. It is of more value to you to do your best to produce work of the kind suggested than to spend too large a proportion of the time in amassing great amounts of technical information.

3. A like caution may be given with regard to the selection of adult associates in the project. The important qualification is that they have the Christian motive, with technical information secondary. If the former is lacking, it will be better to dispense with assistance in the latter and go ahead "digging out" what you can find by reading and general observation. The object of such a project as this is not the accumulation of all possible knowledge on the subject so much as the acquisition of a viewpoint and a method of working.

4. The leader should make good use of his place of leadership especially in the morning discussion hour and in keeping the activities going. He will need to prepare thoughtfully for his meetings with the group and be ready to adjust the plans to meet each new situation which arises.

5. The opportunity to heighten the effect of

the project by keeping the worship element at its best should not be overlooked. The worship themes should be concrete and practical and related to the phase of the project in hand. Take care, also, to have the technique of worship such that it will be effective.

6. Above all, keep constantly before yourselves the idea that there is a Christian way of looking at the public press and that every question must be studied in the spirit of Garrison, whose work upon *The Freeman* is epitomized in the following stanza:

In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,
Toiled o'er his types one poor, unlearned young man;
The place was dark, unfurnished and mean,
Yet there the freedom of a race began.

NOTES

This and the following blank pages are left for copies of programs, outlines of individual papers, committee reports, discussion notes, reports of findings, and other relevant material.

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REFERENCE AND SOURCE MATERIAL

As will be noted in the foregoing plan, much of the educational value of this project would be lost if all the source material needed were put into text form for study. Both from the standpoint of setting the members of the group to work to find the answers to their problems in life about them and to insure freshness of material, this section is organized somewhat differently than in the case of a text. It contains two lists of sources classified on the basis of types of material. In addition to these references some typical examples are given to explain the nature of the help that is available and to start the thinking of the members of the group. The attempt has been made to strike a proper balance between doing the group's work for them and giving no help at all.

For two reasons the number of book sources given in the sections following is somewhat limited. In the first place, as has been indicated, the very best source material is that discovered by the members of the group in the newspapers and magazines with which they come in daily contact. No amount of the views of others can be a substitute for personal and first-hand experience. In the sec-

ond place, it is difficult to list material which is available in the average library. It is suggested that the members make their own list of reading sources after consultation with the local librarian, pastor, journalist, and others.

The inclusion of typical source material has been made possible by the kindness of the several publishing-houses in allowing the quotation of the several specified sections from their publications. The author takes this occasion to express his appreciation and thanks.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MODERN JOURNALISM

Blyer, Willard G., *The Profession of Journalism*. Atlantic Press.

Payne, George H., *History of Journalism in the United States*. Appleton.

Ralph, Julian, *Making of a Journalist*. Harper.

Spencer, M. Lyle, *News Writing*. Heath.

Villard, Oswald G., *Some Newspapers and Newspaper Men*. Knopf.

[See also encyclopedias for articles describing modern journalism and for biographies of famous journalists.]

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE JOURNALIST IN SOCIETY

Angell, Norman, *The Press and the Organization of Society*. London: Labour Publishing Co.

Davis and Chamberlin, *Christian Fellowship among the Nations*, pp. 31-34. Pilgrim Press.

Dodge, Raymond, "The Psychology of Propaganda," *Religious Education*, XV (Oct., 1920), 241-53.

Gibbs, Philip, *Now It Can Be Told*. Harper.

Lippman, Walter, *Liberty and the News*. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Lippman, Walter, *Public Opinion*. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Thorpe, Merle [ed.], *The Coming Newspaper*. Holt.

SEES ASSURANCE OF WORLD-PEACE BY STOPPING POISON PROPAGANDA

OKLAHOMA CITY, May 23.—World peace can be assured by keeping open the avenues of communication and freeing news sources from the poison of interested propaganda, Walter Williams, dean of the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri and president of the World Press Congress, told members of the National Editorial Association in annual convention here today.

"Ideas and not navies rule the sea; ideas, not armies dominate the land," Dean Williams declared. "Lower tolls and thus make available the avenues of communication between nations, and free news sources from the poison of interested propaganda, and we thereby help to make a sick world well. Permit these avenues to be clogged, congested and corrupted—let them remain inadequate—and the fever of war returns apace.

"Not through further regulation by law is journalism to be purified," Dean Williams asserted. "The law may punish a liar, it cannot make him tell the truth; it may put the offender in jail, it cannot place him in the ranks of gentlemen. At best the law is negative to prevent wrong, not positive to insure right.

"The hope of a new journalism is in the profession of journalism itself and in the public opinion of which it is at once the creator."—PRESIDENT WILLIAMS, World Press

Congress [before the National Editorial Association], *Boston Globe*, May 23, 1924.

III. PRESENT-DAY CRITICISM OF THE PRESS

A number of the books listed above contain criticisms of certain modern tendencies in journalism. Editors of our religious periodicals and other writers have lately pointed out serious defects. The current issues of papers and magazines, both secular and religious, should be consulted for articles of this nature. The following excerpts are typical:

OUR PAGAN PRESS

When I was asked to write an article about our pagan press, I demurred. It wasn't that I wanted to defend the press. The press, I admitted, is as bad as the rest of our civilization, and I was perfectly willing to call it all sorts of names. But did the name "pagan" fit? Who were the pagans anyway?

The pagans were the peasants, the little villagers, the outlanders. They worshiped false gods—not because they got any fun out of it, however, but because they lived so far away from civilization that they didn't know that times had changed. . . . The whole trouble, it seems, was that they hadn't heard the news.

Verily, that is the trouble with our press. It is pagan. It is benighted. It doesn't know that times are changing. It is devout and fearful and has ethics of a sort, but it has no spiritual life, and the reason it has no spiritual life is that it is altogether unacquainted with the news. . . . The great journalistic need of America, as I see it, is not

a morally correct periodical but a genuine newspaper—one which knows the news.

Ye shall know the news and the news will make you free. That isn't wresting the Scriptures. Jesus made it plain that he did not come to do away with the old truths but to bring new ones, and whatever degree of emancipation man has achieved to date has been achieved through becoming acquainted with the news. . . .

Think of the ways in which we have achieved real progress and they will turn out to be ways in which the accumulation of real knowledge has been the guiding principle. Think of the ways in which the race is at a standstill, and you will find a sacred theory hovering over the mess.

War, for example. Obviously, there has been no human progress there. Well, put it to the test. Is war governed by news or by sacred theories? The question fairly answers itself. In order to start a war or to keep one going, it is necessary first of all to shut off the news supply. There are no exceptions to this. American military experts agree in this particular with the experts of all possible enemy nations. The people must not know the truth or they simply will not fight. They must not be permitted to become acquainted with the enemy, for when you become acquainted with anyone, you understand him, and wars depend upon keeping up the misunderstanding. So the news is withheld and the sacred theories are trotted out. Above all, the sacred theory of patriotism, the theory that we owe first allegiance to our country, because it is our country, and that we must help it carry out its lies. This is paganism pure and simple. It is the setting up of our tribal god above the God of truth. . . .

A few weeks ago, there was a religious service in Evanston, Illinois, at which some earnest young college stu-

dents made the discovery that they could not remain true to their God and participate in any future war. Whereat, some equally earnest worshipers of a very different deity became alarmed. A controversy ensued, the merits of which I need not discuss here. I wish merely to point out that there were two deities involved. Both are known by the name of Jesus but one is decidedly non-national in character while the other is presumed to look with special favor upon America and to expect his followers to hold the American flag in peculiar reverence. The Chicago newspapers featured the controversy, and the followers of the non-national Jesus were astounded at the way they handled it. That anyone should have been surprised shows how naïve we are. The papers lied forty ways. Of course they did, but what else could they possibly do? The actual facts wouldn't fit into their conception of a 100 per cent American god, and they were compelled either to alter their god or to change the facts. That is one of the handicaps of paganism. Paganism demands loyalty. It demands much more loyalty than the worship of the truth does. You don't have to be particularly loyal, in fact, in order to follow the truth; for if you learn the truth, the truth makes you free. It works. You can always do something with it. But false conceptions don't work, and it requires a tremendous amount of loyalty to hang on to a formula that never works. . . .

Some day, I say, we shall have another sort of press in America. I can't say just when. There is no reason that I can think of why it might not be started almost any time—except that it would be against all the state and national laws and the editors would in all probability be put in jail. That, however, should discourage no one, for the heralds of truth have ever had to work under just such handicaps.—CHARLES W. WOOD, *Christian Century*, May 29, 1924.

ROASTS NATION'S PRESS IN PRAISING CRIMSON

Professor Arthur N. Holcombe, Harvard, sees in the *Crimson*, the college daily, one of the few independent papers in the country. He told a *Crimson* reporter all about it in the following words:

"Newspapers are no longer free agents. The most independent newspaper of which I know is the Harvard *Crimson*. Propaganda and big business have rendered most news journals useless as conveyors of fact. They are mirrors of bias. This trend began during the war and is now predominant. The *Crimson* has no interests controlling it and so it is alive where its contemporaries are dead. Its life is mirrored in its editorials, which express a definite, forceful opinion in great contrast to a journal which must cater to its public."—*Boston Herald*, April 12, 1925.

DO CRIMINALS LIKE PUBLICITY?

Dr. Edward A. Steiner, professor of Applied Christianity at Grinnell College, Iowa, declares that the excess of crime in the United States today is in large measure due to the type of publicity it receives. The American press has lost its place as the mold of public opinion, the professor argues, and has degenerated into melodrama and vaudeville. Those still lingering in the dim shadows of the past, when Dana, Greeley, and Medill were the accepted voice of the American press, possibly will agree with the Grinnell pedagogue, and if they had their way would welcome a return of the period when the daily newspaper consisted of a few pages devoted to first-page medicine advertisements, a few scattering news items, and a lengthy editorial on the state of the world by the editor.

In those days the newspaper was the editor, and it didn't seem to make any difference whether the paper was on a paying basis just so long as the editor continued to be

the sage of the community, and he was read and supported morally by the so-called intelligent citizens in his reading territory. The *Argus* reiterates its often expressed view that publicity is what the criminal does not relish. If you wish proof of this assertion take note of the criminal in the hands of the sheriff being transferred from the jail to the courthouse running a battery of newspaper camera men. Invariably the criminal will raise his hands to his face in his attempt to prevent having his likeness printed in the newspapers. The chances are his picture would be identified elsewhere by authorities who have descriptions of him furnished by others of his victims.

The Grinnell professor says crime should be eliminated from the newspaper headlines and assigned its proper place of importance in the newspaper. The *Argus* always has been of the notion that crime was put in the headlines because of its importance as news over other publicity material, and that editors are supposed to be better judges of what news is than men trained in other lines. Professor Steiner would be a changed man on the composition of the American newspaper were he to spend a week in the office of a modern daily paper and observe the labors of editors and the care they exercise in weighing the relative importance of the news contents of their finished daily product.—Editorial, Rock Island, Ill., *Argus*.

IV. IDEALS AND ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

In addition to the ideals discovered in the foregoing books and in the practices observable in current journalism, one may well study the ideals which journalists have set for themselves. It is hoped that the group will have secured from outstanding editors and owners of journals a personal

statement of their purpose as suggested in the plan above. The ideals of two famous editors and the code of the American Society of Newspaper Editors are set forth here.

I have never consulted the subscription list of the paper or public sentiment in printing or omitting to print any article touching any matter whatsoever.—WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, *The Freeman*, 1865.

Joseph Pulitzer, who made the *New York World*, wrote to one of his managing editors these memorable words:

Concentrate your brain upon these objectives—What is original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd, apt to be talked about, without shocking good taste or lowering the general tone, and above all without impairing the confidence of the people in the truth of the stories or the character of the paper for reliability and scrupulous cleanness.

CANONS OF JOURNALISM

ADOPTED AT FIRST ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 28, 1923, OF
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS

The primary function of newspapers is to communicate to the human race what its members do, feel, and think. Journalism, therefore, demands of its practitioners the widest range of intelligence, of knowledge, and of experience, as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. To its opportunities as a chronicle are indissolubly linked its obligations as teacher and interpreter.

To the end of finding some means of codifying sound

practice and just aspirations of American journalism these canons are set forth:

I

Responsibility.—The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

II

Freedom of the press.—Freedom of the press is to be guarded as a vital right of mankind. It is the unquestionable right to discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law, including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

III

Independence.—Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reason, is not compatible with honest journalism. So-called news communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claim to value as news, both in form and substance.

2. Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession.

IV

Sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy.—Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all journalism worthy of the name.

1. By every consideration of good faith a newspaper is constrained to be truthful. It is not to be excused for lack of thoroughness or accuracy within its control or failure to obtain command of these essential qualities.

2. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles which they surmount.

V

Impartiality.—Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind.

1. This rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmistakably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer's own conclusions and interpretations.

VI

Fair play.—A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard; right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in all cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.

1. A newspaper should not invade private rights or feelings without sure warrant or public right as distinguished from public curiosity.

2. It is the privilege, as it is the duty of a newspaper, to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

VII

Decency.—A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good. Lacking authority to enforce

its canons, the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant professional condemnation.—EDGAR L. HEERMANCE, *Codes of Ethics, a Handbook*. Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Printing Co.

V. BIBLICAL MATERIAL

The Old Testament prophets considered themselves in duty bound to set forth the truth as God had revealed it to them (I Kings 22:16 ff.; Isa. 6:1-8; Amos 7:12-15; Jonah 1:1 ff.; Mic. 1:1 ff.).

Jesus' life and teachings emphasize the central place he gave to truth. For example, Matt. 7:15; John 6:32; 8:32; 14:6; 15:1; 16:13.

Likewise, we find the apostles and Paul compelled to speak the truth regardless of consequences (Acts 4:20; 21:39 ff.; 23:1-12; 26:1 ff.).

VI. EXPERIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following quotations reveal methods which have been suggested and put into practice to place journalism on a higher level.

THE EXPERIMENT OF A CHRISTIAN DAILY

At the close of the year 1899 the Topeka *Daily Capital* was turned over to me for one week in order that I might carry out my idea of what a Christian daily ought to be.

The terms as finally discussed included the following

general agreements, which were carried out almost without change:

The entire paper for one week to be under my direction with the understanding that nothing would be done to jeopardize the property or the future of the paper.

The entire working force of the paper to remain intact, including the mechanical, editorial, reportorial, and office force.

Advertising rates to be on the basis of circulation, but weekly subscription-rates to be twenty-five cents instead of ten cents, which was the regular city and local rate, in order to cover outside expenses and foreign postage.

The editor's rulings to be accepted in every department, including advertising matter, all editorial and submitted articles; and also in matters of personal conduct which involved such practices as the use of tobacco, drink, and profanity.

"News" was defined as any event worth knowing or telling, always published in the right proportion to its real importance.

All prize fights, scandals, crime, vice, or human depravity, if published at all, to be defined as evil, and an attempt made in each case to discover the cause, and, if possible, the remedy.

All editorials to be signed by the writers, and all reporters' items to be signed by the reporters in order to ensure reliability, to reward good reporting, and to fix responsibility.

The editor to receive no financial compensation.

The rule to govern all the management of the paper, including the political, social, and financial interests, was to be determined as nearly as possible by the standard of what Jesus would probably do if He were publishing the paper as the owner of it. . . .

According to the definition of the word "news" which we had made, the most important news item that came in on the night of March 12, 1900, was a brief notice of the India famine. No paper in the United States had given this great calamity any prominence. It seemed to me to be the most important world-news; therefore, supplementing the meagre Associated Press items with letters which I had received from missionaries, I featured the India famine in the first issue of the *Capital*, printing it on the first left-hand column of the front page, the *Capital's* regular place for the most important news.

Along with this news item I printed a call for famine relief asking the readers of the news to send in contributions. . . .

Here are the titles of some of the articles published, and some of the news items discussed, either editorially or on a news page:

Starving India: The War-Spirit Denounced [wars going on at the time were the war in the Philippines and the Boer War]; Is the Boer War Just? [answer, no]; New Books [with reviews by well-known authors]; Federal Reforms; Against Cigarettes; Kindergarten Schools; The Philippines [a history of their internal affairs then published for the first time]; Letters from Famous People; Sunday Observance [advocated]; Market Reports [abbreviated on account of some questionable transactions on the stock market at the time]; Prison Reform; Liquor Advertisements in Magazines [a protest against them—this protest was followed by letters written by prominent people in Kansas, and most of the advertisements were dropped by the magazines when their contracts ran out]; Kansas Millers; Live-stock Market; Mormonism [its menace]; The Tax Dodger [with a cartoon by a well-known artist, M. A. Waterman]; The Union of the Churches [advocated; a front page editorial]; Woman Suffrage [advocated]; Extracts from the National Brewers' Journal Conceding Progress of Prohibition in Kansas; Municipal Ownership [advocated]; In Labor's Behalf [a plea

for better housing-conditions]; Appeal for Cleaner Humor; Tenement House Reform; League of Mothers [advocated]; Police Department [a plea for decent wages]; Women's Clubs; The Y.W.C.A. [appeal for endowment]; Dairying in Kansas [a very remarkable series of articles by Mr. F. D. Coburn, at the time Secretary of Agriculture in Kansas; these articles went all over the world and were copied in scores of journals]; Social Settlements; Against War [written by Dr. Parkhurst of New York]; Sunday School Lessons; The Churches of Topeka; Letters from Ministers; The Armenian Massacres [a protest against them]; Disease Prevention. . . .

One reason for the assumption that the *Christian Daily* was dull and uninteresting may be found in the fact that crime and scandal and sensational divorce cases were absent from its pages. When crime was reported it was reported briefly and the emphasis was placed on the cause, and if possible on the remedy. This is the only scientific way to report crime. It is the way the Bible always reports it, and the Bible is the most scientific world-news reporter that was ever compiled. It is childish and useless to report human frailty simply for the sake of creating a morbid mental sensation in the reader; yet this is the regular and stupid fashion of reporting human sin adopted by those dailies which print elaborate stories of human lapses. The rule which the *Capital* observed during the week that it was a *Christian Daily* was the Bible rule, and in time that will be the rule observed by all the daily press. . . .

In looking over the press notices which commented on the paper, I find that the most frequent criticism, made oftener by ministers than by anyone else, was the severe objection to the thought of Jesus' taking any part in such a prosaic and material thing as a daily paper. The terms "blasphemous," "sacrilegious," "irreverent," are used to describe what the critics called an irreligious attempt to think

of Jesus as participating in any of the common, everyday things that mere human beings have to do for a living.

This thought of Jesus in history is so strange to me that I cannot let this criticism of an attempt to imitate Him in the work of journalism pass without comment. The entire concept of Christianity, to my mind, is stripped of its tremendous meaning if we do not think of Jesus as more vitally interested in the common doings of men than any other being who ever lived. If Jesus could not take part in the publishing of a daily paper, then He could not direct any other energy that we have to use in order to make a living.—CHARLES M. SHELDON, *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1924.

NEIGHBORLY NEWS

Through the initiative of Augustus Seaver, a Yankee printer who "can do everything from printer's devil to editor" and composes editorials on the linotype machine, and with the backing of South End House, the South End and Back Bay sections of Boston have a weekly neighborhood journal. The printer and his wife work together in the shop; for some years they have published a small labor paper; and now they are putting the best part of a 24-hour day into the *South End Sun*. South End House has brought together an advisory board which represents the principal social agencies and local civic groups of the neighborhood, and contributes Albert J. Kennedy's services to carry on the bulk of the editorial work. Mr. Kennedy's breezy *South End Almanac* will be remembered.

The little weekly is shrewdly compounded of local personal news and an informal array of social information. "We hope," writes Robert A. Woods of South End House, "to present the meaning and services of the various agencies largely in personal terms, but in a way that will really in-

terpret them. We have had an increasing feeling that their services were more and more being accepted and understood by the people of the district as part of its intrinsic life, of which they could be proud and in which they could participate. The reception accorded the paper thus far indicates that this is really true."

The paper began its career with several hundred subscribers and several hundred copies of the first number were sold on the news stands. At least one experimental year of publication seems to be assured. Mr. Woods interprets the enterprise thus:

"I think the paper represents a new experiment in tracing and encouraging the varied processes of community reconstruction with direct and continuous appeal reaching out to people of the community at large.

"The reaction upon the social workers themselves will, we believe, be very valuable, both in stirring them to a more personal, more folksy attitude in first-hand relations, and in casting a larger, more dominant perspective in which their plans are to be worked out.

"We can already see many ways in which new types of persons, with fresh ways of approach, can be wrought into the district scheme of service through the demands and the opportunities which the paper will present.

"It is certainly true that the scheme of community organization, in all its phases, must find ways both of knowing the community in its entirety and of making the comprehensive appeal to it. We say a great deal to indicate that these two things are being done: but it is nearly always sadly evident that they are not. The little paper, we feel, is likely to be a really valuable instrument toward 'seeing truth steadily and seeing it whole' in neighborhood terms."

—*Survey*, January 15, 1925.

CHRISTIAN DAILY NEWSPAPER¹.

The following report was adopted:

"That the wisdom and expediency of publishing a daily newspaper of the Methodist Episcopal Church, or the wisdom or expediency of publishing an Interdenominational Newspaper in co-operation with other religious denominations be referred to a commission of five to be raised by the Book Committee to make a thorough investigation and report to the Book Committee, which committee will take such further action as they think best."

AN EDITORIAL OPEN LETTER TO THE
NEWSPAPER PROPRIETORS
OF CHICAGO

GENTLEMEN: We cannot doubt that, as citizens, you who control the great newspapers of Chicago share with all your intelligent and respectable neighbors a grave concern for the evil effects which the press is having upon the moral life of the community. You are citizens, highly respected citizens, and most if not all of you are Christian churchmen. We are sure that those of you who may be the fathers of boys and girls, deplore, as all morally wholesome fathers in the community deplore, the fact that the youths of your own households are subject to the baneful impressions received from a daily picture of the world which distorts reality by exaggerating the vulgar and criminal aspects of society. We believe that you would find the greatest satisfaction in discovering a way by which your newspapers could be lifted to the moral level of your own personal character, where their enormous service to society could be

¹ From the account of the proceedings of the General Conference of the M.E. Church held at Springfield, Mass., May, 1924. Published in the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*.

rendered without the pernicious alloy of the false and indecent which has come to be so large an element in modern journalism. . . .

We know that the apology often made for the vulgarity and scandal which bulks so large in the press is that this is the sort of thing the public wants. That there is some truth in this no one would deny; but you must concede that at least a considerable proportion of this demand is the creation of the press itself, which has fed the baser appetites of the public until it keeps asking for more and still more. Thus there has been set going a vicious circle of supply and demand which cannot be broken except by a moral appeal. This moral appeal can be made to the public to refuse to buy or read the newspapers—a practical impossibility, as we cannot get along without the inestimable good which your great papers contain. The moral appeal can also be made to you, the makers of the newspapers, to revise and reconstruct your theory of news in a fashion that will change the whole countenance of the press and make it a true reflector of the world of reality in which both its proprietors and its readers live. This latter appeal is the purpose and substance of this open letter to you. We write not in any spirit of mere condemnation, but with some degree of imaginative understanding of the enormous difficulties that stand in the way of any change. It is our desire to face the situation with you and to make a definite proposal which we believe will commend itself to you as offering a way out. . . .

Our proposal is this: That you, the proprietors of the daily press of Chicago, agree together upon a united shift in news emphasis for one month. Any one of you to whom this letter comes can arrange a meeting of your entire group; we have faith to believe that no one of you would remain away from it. In such a meeting it could be decided

that all the newspapers of Chicago would for thirty days "play down" crime, bestiality and the sordid aspects of life, and "play up" those really significant events and constructive activities that make citizenship in such a city and such a land a high privilege. This is not a matter of any hard and fast rules; it is nothing more than a month's trial of a reversal of your present theory of news. . . .

The whole nation, aye, the whole world would be keenly interested in what you were proposing to do, and in watching you do it. Twenty years ago, Dr. Charles M. Sheldon advanced the circulation of the *Topeka Capital* from 35,000 to 375,000 by a week's experiment in clean journalism. Mr. Sheldon was an amateur; he worked with meager facilities in a small Kansas city. What could the newspapers of Chicago not do if they devoted their enormous resources to a common adventure in this realm! Even if the experiment should fail of any permanent modification of your theory and policy of news it would be financially profitable. But, gentlemen, we are convinced that it would succeed in both ways, financially and journalistically. You would discover a treatment of news so successful and so rewarding that nothing could induce you, at the end of the experimental month, to go back to the old level.—EDITORS, *Christian Century*, January 29, 1925.

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER?

As editor of the *San Jose* [California] *News*, it seemed to me, I occupied a position repugnant to all my social and political theories. I was a chancellor responsible only to an irresponsible monarch, the proprietor of the paper. He had come into the town, and, because he possessed a certain amount of money, he had suddenly become autocrat of this long established newspaper, this important piece of public property. What right had he to do this, or to follow his

whim and make me an editor? Had he not been a liberal, he would not have made me editor. But what right had liberals, any more than conservatives, to be absolute monarchs or chancellors chosen by absolute monarchs?

After consultation with H. L. Baggerly, the owner of the paper, we announced editorially what we called the Community Editorial Plan. Every important opinion-group in the community was invited to elect an associate editor of the paper. These associate editors were to represent their respective groups in the community editorial column, which was to be the leading feature of the editorial page, occupying the position of honor previously assigned to our own editorials. The editor's column was to be shoved off to a less prominent position on the page, and was to be in smaller type. It was my theory that for a considerable time the chief function of the editor's column would be to explain and perhaps defend the community editorial column, as I realized that there was much educational work to be done before the business management of the paper, the advertisers, the subscribers in general and the opinion-groups in particular would grasp the plan fully.

What were my troubles in administering this scheme? Well, in the first place there was the daily job of seeing to it that the associate editors turned in sufficient copy to fill the community editorial column.

At first I found the labor unions surprisingly apathetic, in view of all their criticism of the press. But when the prohibition problem came up in a state election the associate editor of one of the labor councils came suddenly to life, and commenced writing vehement denunciations of the drys. Then another labor associate editor was a communist, and commenced writing some very radical editorials. It was here that I lost my nerve, and acted far more like the chancellor of an irresponsible autocrat than the premier of

a constitutional monarchy. I read one editorial which the communistic labor man had turned in, and I shuddered to think what some of our leading conservatives would think of it. . . .

I did finally persuade the labor man to eliminate one paragraph, and, although he protested that the editorial was ruined, the fact remains that our subscribers were treated next day to a thousand-word advocacy of pure communism, in ten-point type, two columns wide. I never heard a word of complaint, and have later come to believe that I should not have heard any even had the offending paragraph been printed.

Then an associate editor who was a Protestant pastor and an associate editor who was a Catholic priest commenced pouring hot shot into one another on the issue of religious education. . . .

We finally let the community editorial column subside, but it was not because of any interference from advertisers, or because the plan had proved unpopular with our subscribers. We let it lapse for the very lazy but very human reason that we discovered it would take all of one skilled diplomat's time to keep after the associate editors for their copy and to adjust disputes arising between associate editors. And at the time there were so many routine problems pressing on us that we lacked the vision to realize that it would have been well worth while to devote one skilled man's entire time to the nursing of the project. The associate editors, left to themselves, gradually wrote less and less and finally nothing at all.

But despite this somewhat pallid external conclusion, we had reaped great and deserved benefits from the plan. There had arisen in the community a very definite feeling that our paper stood for fair play and free speech and free press to an unusual degree. This feeling still persists. . . .

It seemed to me then, and it still seems to me, that the community newspaper plan conserves the best features of private proprietorship, that is, initiative, profit-rewarded enterprise, and simple swift decisions on financial and technical details, at the same time that it confers the benefits of public democratic participation in one of the most important processes of modern life.—ROBERT LOUIS BURGESS, *Survey*, November 15, 1924.

CAN THE PUBLIC HELP JOURNALISM OUT OF THE WOODS?

Is it hoping too much that journalism should be made more serviceable to the public by the erection within itself of some such structure as holds up each of the other professions: an authority to say who may get in; an authority to say who must get out?

The public has never been backward in its criticism of the press, and today everybody is ready to tell offhand what is the matter with the newspapers. However justified this criticism may be, most of it is misdirected. It is aimed, that is, at the symptoms rather than at the fundamental causes. . . .

Obviously, any improvements in journalism are to be accomplished by the same influences that bring about improvements in people. Such influences as associations, legal restrictions, standards, criticism, education—a mixture of candy and the rod. . . .

Codes of ethics have been adopted by most newspaper organizations. Sometimes they are painstakingly constructed and considered seriously. Sometimes they are little more than a gesture. None of them is dynamic in the sense that violations of the code are punishable. Almost never is a case of malpractice brought before any association, there being no machinery for handling such a case, no procedure

laid down, no legal backing. But it cannot be doubted that codes of ethics exert an educational influence—as is their purpose.

Criticism by the public is another constructive influence. It is sometimes ignored, sometimes resented, occasionally weighed judiciously by the editor. But never is the editor oblivious to it. In the degree that it is intelligent criticism, it reaches its mark. Its influence is never failing, since criticism is never failing and since, with a better understanding of the newspaper, criticism has become more intelligent.

Leadership by individual newspapers which exemplify sound fundamentals of conduct has had its part in betterment and will continue to do much to help guide the procession.

Educational influences growing out of the accession to journalism of greater numbers of college men and women, and more recently men and women from schools and departments of journalism, are to be taken into account—and will inevitably count for more in the near future.

These four or five major factors in shaping the future of the press are recognized and approved, for the most part, by the press itself. They are admitted to be constructive. Various suggestions along other lines are not so recognized. Among these are:

1. The publication of official newspapers to serve as pace-makers for the others. The much-criticized *Official Bulletin* published during the war, and the unsuccessful experiment with the *Los Angeles Municipal News*, and other similar ventures, have tended to discredit all such attempts in the eyes of the press and the public alike.

2. The endowment by wealthy men or groups of men or organizations, of newspapers calculated to serve as models. This plan has hardly received a fair tryout. It seems

doubtful that any such tryout can be expected in the near future in view of the fact that millions of dollars would be necessary to endow a newspaper large enough to test the plan.

3. Demonstrations of the ideal in journalism by ministers or others editing a newspaper for a short period. The demonstration made during a period of a week by Dr. Charles M. Sheldon, who edited the *Topeka Daily Capital*, probably attracted more notice than any other, because of the prominence of the man.

One newspaper called by its publisher a "Golden Rule newspaper," lived twenty-one years, but failed to make a great impression upon journalism. Another daily paper launched as a Christian newspaper in Chicago endured for a few months, but was then suspended with an announcement of insufficient support. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the ideal in journalism is being approximated, here and there, every day and is having persistent influence for betterment. . . .

How can any editor who is concerned about the influence of the press be indifferent to this problem? It lies at the foundation of his influence. The public is not satisfied with its newspapers. It does not acknowledge their leadership, however much it may be unconsciously led. Journalism, as a profession, is lost in the woods. It is the editor's business to find the way out. It is the privilege of the public to help him to do so.—L. N. FLINT [head of Department of Journalism, University of Kansas], *Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 1925.

SEGREGATION OF CRIME NEWS CALLED SUCCESS

DES MOINES, IOWA, May 9.—The *Des Moines Register* will continue its policy of segregating crime news on an inside section indefinitely, it was announced here tonight by John Cowles, associate publisher.

The *Register*, a pioneer in the movement of separate treatment of crime news, has met with success in its experiment, it was said, and had received thousands of letters from readers commending its experiment.—*Boston Herald*, May 11, 1925.

COMMENDABLE BANISHMENT

The *Des Moines Register* in banishing all crime from its front page has undertaken one of the most commendable experiments ever tried by a newspaper. The success of the project naturally still hangs in the balance; the theory is still new and untried, but such an innovation certainly deserves all the help that can be given it. Particularly at this time when all news is sensation, and all sensation news, there should be some champion of a better era. The *Des Moines Register* has been the first to take up arms, the first to attempt a remedy.

Murder in three-inch headlines, robbery in packed columns, and sex abuse wherever these are not, have too long hammered their suggestions from the first page. Bury such matters in the inner pages and they lose half their force. Keep them out entirely and the press will be thoroughly respectable, but such a measure will come only with time. The *Des Moines Register* has driven the first wedge.—*Harvard University Crimson*.

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Additional references and source material may be put on these pages.

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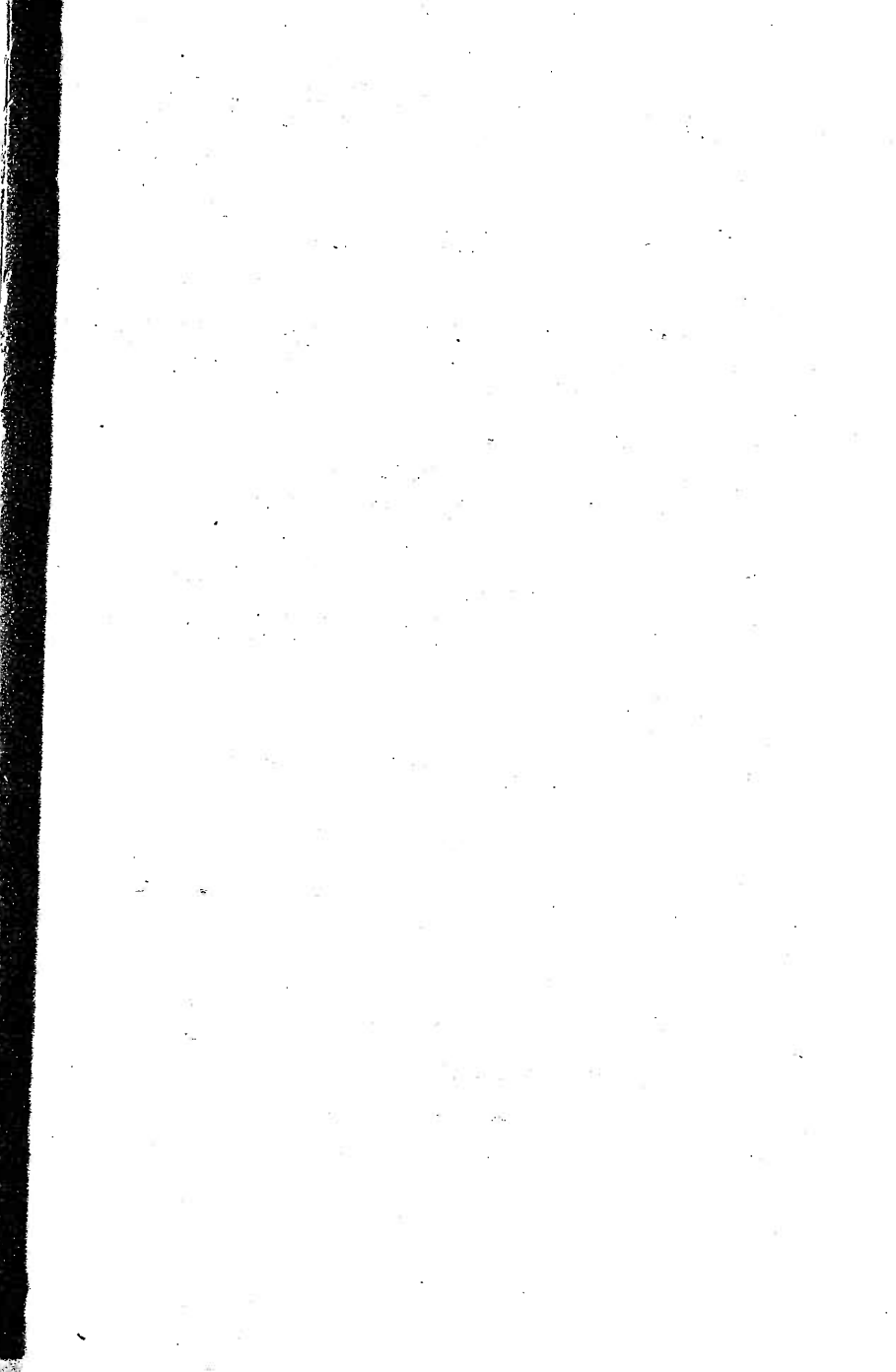
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